

Message Text

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R 290650Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0133
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS PGOV SREF BC RH SF WA AO LT
SUBJ: BOTSWANA REFUGEE REPORT

REF: (A) GABORONE 1004, (B) GABORONE 1250

REGRET TRANSMISSION OF THIS CABLE DELAYED DUE TO CIRCUIT
OUTAGE SINCE 0600Z JUNE 25.

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY BELIEVES REFUGEE PROBLEM IN BOTSWANA CAN
BE PARTIALLY CONTAINED AS LONG AS THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE
MET:

A. CHARTER FLIGHTS TRANSPORTING RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA
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TO ZAMBIA PROCEED SMOOTHLY AND IN SUFFICIENT NUMBERS;

B. ZAMBIA CONTINUES IN ITS WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE RHODESIAN
REFUGEES TRANSPORTED FROM BOTSWANA;

C. UNHCR IS SUCCESSFUL IN CREATING ADMINISTRATIVE FOUNDATIONS
AND FACILITIES FOR BOTH DAY-TO-DAY CARE OF REFUGEES AND FOR

MEETING LONG-TERM PLANNING;

D. UNHCR BOTSWANA CONTINUES TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES FROM UNHCR GENEVA TO COPE WITH REFUGEE RELIEF;

E. RATE OF NEW REFUGEES ENTERING BOTSWANA (CURRENTLY AT ABOUT 100 PER DAY) DOES NOT RISE TO POINT WHICH WOULD OVERWHELM RESOURCES; AND

F. CONTINUED COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE OF GOB TO REFUGEE RELIEF.

EMBASSY BELIEVES THESE CONDITIONS ARE CURRENTLY BEING MET. HOWEVER, OUTLOOK FOR FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN. THERE FOLLOWS DISCUSSION OF CONDITIONS CRITICAL TO REFUGEE RELIEF IN BOTSWANA. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARTER FLIGHTS: TEN TO FOURTEEN WEEKLY CHARTER FLIGHTS, 60 PASSENGERS EACH FLIGHT, CARRY RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA. AS THE MAIN MEANS OF GETTING BURDENSOME REFUGEES OUT OF THE COUNTRY, THE CHARTER FLIGHT LINK IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE WHOLE RELIEF PROGRAM. HOWEVER, GOB AND UNHCR REPS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT CHARTER FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS ARE TENUOUS AND COULD BE UPSET BY:

A. THE INABILITY OF THE ZAMBIAN AND/OR BOTSWANA AIRLINES TO CONTINUE THE SERVICE;
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B. THE UNWILLINGNESS OF ZAMBIANS AT SOME POINT TO CONTINUE RECEIVING REFUGEES (SEE PARA 3 BELOW); AND

C. THE DRYING UP OF FUNDS TO FINANCE CHARTERS. STORIES CIRCULATE HERE THAT PATRIOTIC FRONT FUNDS ARE DRYING UP AND THAT TREMENDOUS UNPAID SUMS ARE OWED BY THE ZAMBIANS TO AIR BOTSWANA FOR CHARTER FLIGHTS. MATTER OF UNPAID BILLS APPARENTLY RESULTS FROM NORMAL TWO-MONTH PERIOD IT TAKES ZAMBIANS TO PAY BOSWANA THROUGH IATA CLEARINGHOUSE AND IS NO PROBLEM. HOWEVER, IT DOES APPEAR THAT THE MUGABE WING OF PATRIOTIC FRONT IS NOW WITHOUT FUNDS TO PAY FOR FLIGHTS, AND ITS MEMBERS ARE BEGINNING TO ACCUMULATE IN BOTSWANA. THAT THIS IS THE CASE IS SUGGESTED BY THE FACT THAT UNHCR FINDS ITSELF MOUNTING A CHARTER OPERATION TO FLY 380 REFUGEES, HALF OF WHOM ARE MUGABE SUPPORTERS, OUT OF BOTSWANA (SEE PARA 6, H). MOREOVER, INASMUCH AS MUGABE HIMSELF ATTACKED THE USSR BITTERLY DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO PIKING, IT SEEMS THAT LITTLE, IF ANY, FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHARTERING OUT THE MUGABE BACKERS WOULD COME FROM THE USSR, REPUTEDLY THE MAIN SOURCE OF MONEY FOR CHARTERS HERE.

3. ZAMBIAN WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE REFUGEES: VERY LITTLE IS

KNOWN BY UNHCR OR EMBASSY OF WHAT HAPPENS TO REFUGEES AFTER THEY ARRIVE IN ZAMBIA NOR OF ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO CONTINUE HANDLING THE CIRCA 3000 REFUGEES WHICH IT POSSIBLY RECEIVES EVERY MONTH (TEN TO FOURTEEN FLIGHTS A WEEK TIMES 60 PASSENGERS). IT SEEMS FROM HERE THAT THESE NUMBERS WOULD PUT A STRAIN ON ZAMBIAN RESOURCES AND THAT A SATURATION POINT MUST EXIST BEYOND WHICH REFUGEES WOULD NO LONGER BE WELCOME THERE.

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R 290650Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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4. UNHCR EFFORTS AND LONG-TERM PLANNING: UNHCR RESREP PERKINS POINTS OUT THAT UN HAD LONG IGNORED BOTSWANA REFUGEE PROBLEMS. INASMUCH AS ENTIRE 1976 UNHCR BUDGET AMOUNTED TO ONLY \$60,000, PLANNING IN JANUARY 1977 STARTED AT ALMOST GROUND ZERO. SITUATION NOW VASTLY IMPROVED AND OVER \$1,200,000 HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 1977 ALONG (EXCLUDING U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO FARAH MISSION APPEAL). STUMBLING BLOCK OF POOR GOB ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS IS BEING LARGELY BY-PASSED AS UNHCR (WITH GOB CONCURRENCE) TAKES OVER DAY-TO-DAY RESPONSIBILITIES USING THE BOTSWANA RED CROSS AS OPERATING PARTNER, LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT WITH ONLY THE MAJOR DECISIONS TO MAKE. WITH TWO PERMANENT CAMPS AND ONE TENT CAMP IN SELEBI-PIKWE PLUS THE

OLD FRANCISTOWN CAMP, REFUGEE CAMP CAPACITY BY END OF 1977
SHOULD SATISFACTORILY ACCOMMODATE APPROXIMATELY 3,300
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ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEES, A NUMBER EXCEEDING THE AVERAGE CURRENT
ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEE CENSUS IN BOTSWANA.

5. DESPITE PROGRESS UNDERWAY IN REFUGEE CAMPS, CRYING NEED
STILL EXISTS FOR EDUCATING AND CONSTRUCTIVELY ORGANIZING
THE SOME NINE HUNDRED SOUTH AFRICAN, RHODESIAN AND OTHER
STUDENT REFUGEES OUTSIDE OF THE CAMPS IN GABORONE AND IN OTHER
AREAS WHO, AT PRESENT, HAVE ESSENTIALLY LITTLE TO DO. OPENING
OF PLANNED SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT WITH U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS
TO FARAH MISSION APPEAL APPEARS TO BE AT LEAST EIGHTEEN
MONTHS IN FUTURE. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO PERKINS, NO MASSIVE
BREAKTHROUGH HAS YET OCCURRED IN SENDING THESE STUDENT
REFUGEES FOR FURTHER EDUCATION TO OTHER AFRICAN STATES. IN
ONE SENSE, THE SOUTH AFRICANS HERE PRESENT THE BIGGEST HEADACHE
TO THE GOB BECAUSE, UNLIKE THE RHODESIAN REFUGEE FREEDOM FIGHTERS,
THERE IS NO WAY TO GET RID OF THEM. TOO, REFUGEE-BATSWANA
RELATIONS ARE NOT THE BEST. THE BATSWANA POINT TO THE RISING
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THEY CONSIDER TO BE CAUSED
BY THEIR GUESTS. THE REFUGEES OFTEN CONSIDER THAT THE BATSWANA
HAVE LET THEM DOWN IN TERMS OF BOTH MONEY, CARE AND COMPASSION.

6. UNHCR PROGRAMS UNDERWAY AND NEAR COMPLETION:

A. COMPLETION OF SELEBI-PIKWE PERMANENT TRANSIT CAMP FOR
1,000 REFUGEES BY FIRST WEEK IN JULY 1977.

B. PLANNING COMPLETE FOR A SECOND PERMANENT SELEBI-PIKWE
CAMP FOR 1,000 TO BE OPENED IN THE FALL OF 1977.

C. CRITICAL SUPPLY SHORTAGE AT FRANCISTOWN CAMP RELIEVED
(SEE GABORONE 1250 AND GABORONE A-66, JUNE 28, 1977).

D. REFUGEE STUDY CENTER AND LIBRARY PLANNED FOR OPENING NEAR
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GABORONE IN SEPTEMBER 1977. UNHCR FUNDS
TO BE USED FOR CORRESPONDENCE COURSES AND MATERIALS.

E. SHIFTING OF FEMALE REFUGEES FROM UNDESIRABLE FRANCISTOWN
CAMP TO SELEBI-PIKWE FOR BETTER QUARTERS AND CHARTER FLIGHTS
TO ZAMBIA.

F. UNHCR FUNDING TO INCREASE GOB STAFF HANDLING FRANCISTOWN CAMP.

G. SELF-HELP PROJECTS CARRIED OUT WITH ASSISTANCE OF QUAKER GROUP AND UNHCR GRANTS AND INTEREST-FREE LOANS. WE UNDERSTAND, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT 11 ANGOLANS ARE SETTING UP A RADIO REPAIR SHOP HERE.

H. UNHCR AD HOC FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN HIRING CHARTERS TO FLY REFUGEES TO ZAMBIA. ACCORDING TO PERKINS, SOME 380 NKOMO AND MUGABE SUPPORTERS WILL SOON BE CHARTERED OUT OF BOTSWANA COURTESY OF UNHCR.

I. SHIFTING TO UNHCR HEADQUARTERS TO LARGER OFFICES AND ENLARGEMENT OF STAFF BY TWO OFFICERS, A SECRETARY AND A DRIVER. FURTHERMORE, BOTH LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND WILL RECEIVE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES ALLOWING PERKINS AND STAFF TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO BOTSWANA.

J. PROJECT TO IMPROVE HOUSING FOR SOUTH AFRICAN AND OTHER REFUGEES LIVING IN GABORONE AREA.

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R 290650Z JUN 77
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INFO AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM
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7. SUPPORT FROM UNHCR GENEVA: PERKINS SAYS THAT ALL OF HIS REQUESTS FOR MONEY SO FAR HAVE BEEN HONORED OR PROMISED BY UNHCR GENEVA AND THAT HIS CONTINUED SUCCESS WILL DEPEND LARGELY UPON GENEVA'S ABILITY TO COME UP WITH FUNDS. NEITHER PERKINS NOR EMBASSY IN GOOD POSITION TO EVALUATE PROSPECTS GENEVA'S CONTINUED SUCCESS IN FUND RAISING.

8. NUMBERS OF REFUGEES: NEITHER GOB ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TIBONE NOR UNHCR REP PERKINS SAID THEY COULD PROVIDE ACCURATE FIGURES ON THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA. TIBONE CONSIDERED THAT THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN PRESENTLY FLUCTUATED BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR THOUSAND. PERKINS THOUGHT THAT WITH THE RECENT EFFICIENT RUNNING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE CHARTERS THE TOTAL NUMBER HAD DROPPED BELOW THREE THOUSAND. ("I CAN TELL YOU THIS," HE SAID, "NKOMO IS GETTING ONE HELL OF A LOT OF SOLDIERS.") ACCORDING TO PERKINS, THE POPULATION AT THE FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBIPIKWE CAMPS HAD DROPPED SUBSTANTIALLY, BUT TEMPORARILY, DOWN FROM THE 1800 AND 950 OF MAY 25 WHEN PERKINS AND THE EMBOFF WERE THERE. (NEVERTHELESS, TIBONE CONSIDERED THAT THE FRANCISTOWN FIGURE WAS STILL OVER 1,000 ON JUNE 21.) PERKINS' ESTIMATE OF THE TEMPORARY SUB 3,000 FIGURE TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE FACT THAT THE TOTAL SOUTH AFRICAN, ANGOLAN, NAMIBIAN, BASOTHO, MALAWIAN AND MOZAMBIQUAN REFUGEE POPULATION HAS REMAINED FAIRLY CONSTANT AT THE 840 REPORTED IN GABORONE 1004 ON MAY 4. (TO THIS FIGURE WE MUST ADD THE 36 NEW SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES WHO, ACCORDING TO UNHCR, ARRIVED BETWEEN MAY 1 AND JUNE 23.) OBVIOUSLY, WITH THE FLUCTUATING NUMBERS OF REFUGEES, PARTICULARLY RHODESIANS, BOTH ENTERING AND LEAVING BOTSWANA, A LOW FIGURE UNDER 3,000 COULD EASILY RISE BACK TO 4,000 OR BEYOND AT ANY TIME. CERTAINLY, A NEW FLOOD OF SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES MAY COME IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CURRENT DISTURBANCES SPARKED BY THE ANNIVERSARY OF SOWETO.

9. ATTITUDE OF GOB: DEGREE OF GOB COOPERATION IN LONG RUN WILL DEPEND ON SPEED WITH WHICH REFUGEES CAN BE PASSED ON TO ZAMBIA AND AMOUNT OF UNHCR SUPPORT RECEIVED. GOB OBVIOUSLY TORN BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN REQUIREMENT OF CARING FOR REFUGEES ON ONE HAND AND, ON THE OTHER, FEAR THAT IF LIFE BECOMES TOO COMFORTABLE FOR THEM IN BOTSWANA MORE WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO COME. ACCORDINGLY, IN LAST FEW WEEKS SOME IN GOB HAD SERIOUS MISGIVINGS ABOUT FARAH MISSION CALL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO ACCOMMODATE REFUGEE STUDENTS. ONLY AFTER SOME INTERNAL DEBATE DID

GOB CONFIRM ITS ORIGINAL INTENTION OF BUILDING THE SCHOOLS.
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10. IN ANY CASE, GOB ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGEES IS WANTING. IN ORDER TO SOUND OUT GOVERNMENT ON SUBJECT OF POSSIBLE OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, DCM ASKED ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TIBONE IF, IN VIEW OF THE MANY DEMANDS ON HIS TIME, THE USG MIGHT PROVIDE SOME HELP IN ADMINISTERING THE REFUGEE PROGRAM IN THE FORM OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS EXPERTS. TIBONE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION, REPLYING THAT THE GOB WAS CONSIDERING REQUESTING HELP FROM THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION, THE UN AND PERHAPS (BUT LESS LIKELY) THE USG; SUCH REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE TO BE APPROVED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS. HOWEVER, INASMUCH AS BOTSWANA WAS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF CONSIDERING A POSSIBLE RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE REFUGEE PROGRAM, HE THOUGHT A REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT BE FORTHCOMING AT THIS TIME. CONCERNING THE PARTICULAR PROBLEM OF THE FRANCISTOWN REFUGEE CAMP, TIBONE SAID THE GOB WAS AT THE MOMENT INTENSIVELY SEARCHING FOR A MOTSWANA TO PROVIDE ON -THE-SPOT ADMINISTRATION.

11. CONCLUSIONS: SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGEES HERE DEPENDS ON THE MEETING OF CONDITIONS ENUMERATED IN THIS SEEMS TO BE THE CASE FOR NOW.
PARA 1. MANY OF THESE FACTORS ARE SO INTERRELATED (E.G., ATTITUDE OF GOB TOWARD REFUGEES AND CONTINUED RELIEF PROVIDED BY ADEQUATE CHARTER FLIGHTS AND UNHCR FUNDS) THAT A BREAKDOWN OF ONE ELEMENT COULD LEAD TO THE BREAKDOWN OF OTHERS THEREBY THREATENING THE ENTIRE RELIEF EFFORT. SO FAR, UNHCR APPEARS TO BE UNDERWAY IN ESTABLISHING ITS PRESENCE HERE AND, WITH EXPANDING STAFF AND REFUGEE FACILITIES, IS HANDLING DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEMS AND TAKING LONGER VIEW OF FUTURE REFUGEE REQUIREMENTS.
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